

# The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Thursday, December 22, 1994

Published Since 1877

## Hark!

### Americans herald renewed interest in angels

(ABP) — If an angel gets wings every time a bell rings — as Clarence claims in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" — the constant ringing of cash registers with the sale of angel products this Christmas signals a bumper crop of angel graduates.

Angels appear everywhere this holiday season.

They're on Christmas trees and Christmas cards, to be sure. But they're also the subject of prominent displays in virtually every book store in the nation. They're on magazine covers, posters, jewelry, T-shirts, and knick-knack shelves.

But if you listen closely and move beyond the cry of commercialism, you'll hear a common message resounding across religious traditions: Angels are for real.

And, ironically, the quiet message attributed to angels directly opposes the loud commercialism propelling the current angel frenzy.

The chief message of the angels is "Fear not," said Eileen Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation and author of three best-selling books on angels. "God is telling us not to be afraid, and I think that is a very important message in our age. People have not turned to Jesus, but to the unholy trinity of money, power, and prestige."

Freeman, a Christian raised in the Catholic faith and a graduate of Notre Dame University, founded Angel Watch two years ago as a non-profit foundation to help people search for God through the work of angels. She speaks around the nation, writes, and counsels people with questions about angels.

She's not alone in this emerging cottage industry that's part spiritual and part sales. Consider these trends:

Five years ago, only five books about angels were in print in the U.S., according to Gannett News Service. Today, at least 200 books on angels line the shelves of both religious and secular book stores. Many have become best-sellers.

Linda Whitman Vephula, a Baptist in Atlanta, recently launched a new nationwide magazine devoted exclusively to angels. The *Angel Times* is a 68-page glossy color magazine hitting national newsstands priced at \$5 per copy. It's not intended to be a commercial venture, she explained, but is her response to the ministry of angels.

Ray Martin Curry of Virginia founded Twenty-eight Angels Inc. as a clearinghouse for angel information. Dozens of people call her toll-free line daily to report angelic encounters and seek spiritual direction. She speaks around the nation and this year sponsored her first international conference on angels and art in Italy.

People promoting angels today range all the way from the founder of the Psychic

Friends Network to an ordinary Baptist minister and his wife.

This wide range of influence causes Maurice Smith, a Southern Baptist expert on New Age movements, cults, and world religions, to issue a warning to curious Christians: "All of us need to be careful that we do not assume that everybody who believes in angels has the same concept of angels we have."

Since the subject of angels has not been

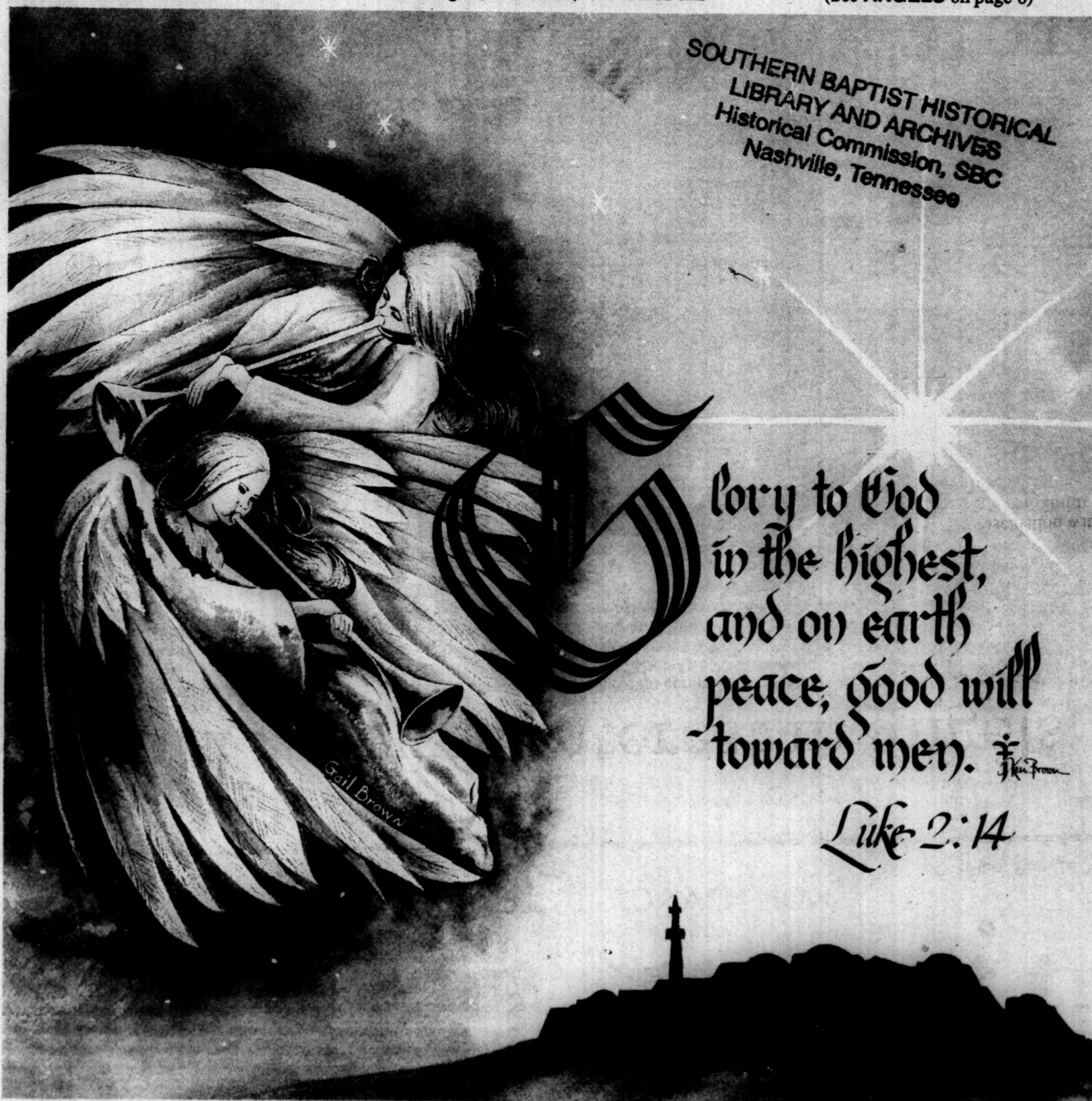
widely discussed, Baptists have no common doctrine on the issue, he said. "Therefore, people hold many of their beliefs in a kind of popular mode. There are no guidelines. You can't go out and get the official Baptist book on angels."

This creates a strange mix whereby people who hold highly orthodox views in other areas blindly accept unorthodox views about angels, said Smith, who retired this

year from the interfaith witness staff of the Home Mission Board.

For example, "Baptists traditionally have believed that angels are a created order of beings and that they are not people who have died," Smith said. "But in the popular vein, angels often are people who have died."

Another danger with the fascination with angels is the threat of universalism, Smith said. (See **ANGELS** on page 6)



Gloria to God  
in the highest,  
and on earth  
peace, good will  
toward men. ✠

Luke 2:14

Ken and Gail Brown created the angel artwork. Ken is an internationally known calligrapher and host of a public television calligraphy series. Gail is a watercolor, charcoal, and pen-and-ink artist. They offer readers free samples of their work. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Ken and Gail Brown, Box 22 AB, McKinney, TX 75069. Art and calligraphy, copyright 1993, Ken Brown Studio.



## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Guy Henderson

## Winter in Galatians

It is no longer called "January Bible Study." The pressure is off. Now it is the "Winter Bible Study," and the important thing is to observe it in your church. Long winter evenings are an ideal time for a church to engage in some serious study of the Word. Here is an exciting event for your church regardless of its size. Plan it, promote it, and do it. The purpose is to expose all our people to the truth of God's Word.

Galatians is the book; *Saved by Grace* is the title of the adult study written by Thomas Lea. We come to study the Bible, not alone, but in the company of the family of God. You become acquainted with the apostle Paul and the world in his day. The *New American Commentary on Galatians*, written by Timothy George, reminds us that Galatians is differ-

ent. Philippians is a love letter, Romans reflects a master theologian reveling in the doctrine of grace, and Ephesians makes clear the body of Christ.

In Galatians there is a small splash of tenderness but it bristles with passion, sarcasm, and anger, says George. Paul was perplexed by their departure from the truth. Who had bewitched this group of believers? It's like a "lion turned loose in the arena of Christianity." Other influences scream for attention; the Hebrew religion, the Greek culture, and the Roman rule. Paul was neck deep in all of it but still he is preaching salvation by grace. It is interesting to note Paul's reaction to this heresy in the early church. Tupelo's Robert L. Hamblin, in *Studies in Galatians*, brings out the practical applications for life as it is today.

The contemporary teachings of Galatians are enumerated in the *Disciple's Study Bible*. People then and now find it difficult to accept salvation as a free gift. They want to earn it and at least partially justify themselves. Some have turned to the teachings of cults and sects and their "false aura of holiness" because of strong legal requirements. Privileges of freedom, liberty, sonship, and the spirit of promise are received; but along with the privileges there are also the responsibilities.

Our churches need to be taught the great lessons of Galatians. It can involve all age groups and, if properly planned, will prove to be a most rewarding north star in the face of any winter of discontent. Let 1995 bring this blessing into your church.

"We have seen His star... and have come to worship Him" Matt. 2:2



## CLC gives Congress input on school prayer amendment

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission is lending a hand to incoming Speaker Newt Gingrich's announced plans for the House of Representatives to vote on a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution by July 4, 1995, to permit voluntary school prayer.

Three CLC leaders, Executive Director Richard Land, James

Smith, government relations director, and Michael Whitehead, general counsel, met Dec. 7 with Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., who was designated by Gingrich to draft a suitable proposal.

Gingrich's activism for school prayer has rekindled the controversial issue, which dates back to much-debated 1962 and 1963 Supreme Court rulings striking

down government-sponsored prayer and Bible reading in public schools.

According to Whitehead, the first draft of a proposed amendment by Istook states:

"Nothing in this constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any State to participate in prayer. Neither the United States nor any State shall compose the words of any prayer to be said in public schools."

According to Land, "Such an amendment would prohibit the government from sponsoring religion as was done prior to 1963, but would also forbid the government and the court system from censoring or segregating voluntary student religious expression from the public school milieu."

On the other side, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Southern Baptist Convention's religious liberty agency until replaced by the CLC several years ago, issued a formal statement Nov. 22 opposing any amendment to the U.S. Constitution to permit voluntary school prayer.

Moreover, an interfaith coalition — including the BJC — has been assembled to oppose any such amendment. The coalition sent a letter to President Clinton Nov. 18 stating its categorical opposition, according to news reports.

The Baptist Joint Committee, in its Nov. 22 statement, listed four points to amplify its stance:

— "Students already have the right to pray in public schools. Stu-

dents can pray privately anytime they choose — in the classroom, the lunchroom, or the playground.

— "It is always dangerous to fiddle with the Constitution, particularly the First Amendment. For over two centuries the religion clauses in the First Amendment have stood as twin pillars ensuring religious liberty. The proposed amendment would do great harm to this freedom.

— "The proposed amendment is off base because it: (1) 'politicizes' prayer by polarizing the debate and allowing a holy act of religious worship to be kicked around like a political football; (2) 'governmentalizes' prayer, placing in the hands of governmental officials sacred tasks belonging properly to individual believers and congregations; (3) 'secularizes' prayer, calling upon school officials — many of whom may not have any religious expertise or conviction — to participate in religious worship; and (4) 'trivializes' prayer by reducing it to a brief and hollow ritual.

— "We are not opposed to prayer. It is precisely because we believe so fervently in prayer that we do not want government to meddle in it. Prayer should be left to the houses of worship, family, and to the students themselves."

Whitehead, meanwhile, in his analyses in the CLC publication *Salt* counters various BJC arguments:

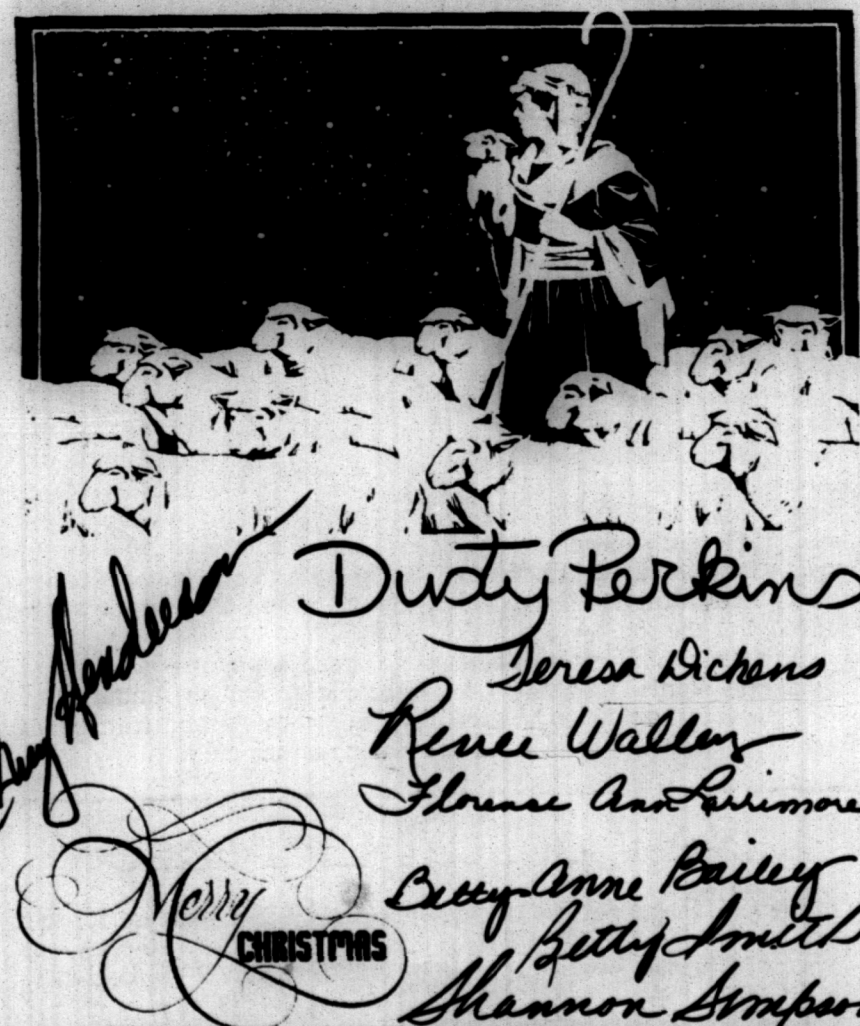
— "It does not purport to reverse the 1962-63 decisions of the Supreme Court banning government-mandated prayer and Bible-reading. Most Americans, including Southern Baptists, do not

want government officials dictating religious exercises. We support this view of separation of church and state. On the other hand, the vast majority of Americans, including Southern Baptists, want liberty for their students to pray. An April 1994 Wirthlin poll shows over 78% support. Most people don't want the 'wall of separation' used as a barrier to student prayer in the classroom, lunchroom, gym, or commencement hall. They reject any notion of the 'wall' which equates separation of church and state with separation of religious speech from public life.

— "It is not a 'moment of silence' amendment. We already have the right to remain silent. That is in the Fifth Amendment. This proposal would protect the right of prayer and religious expression, out loud, so long as it was not materially disruptive of the school program."

In a Nov. 21 statement, Whitehead took issue with the "tinkering with the Constitution." "That is an especially odd cry for Baptists," he said. "Early Virginia Baptists like John Leland opposed ratification of the Constitution unless it contained a bill of rights including a provision to protect religious freedom expressly...."

"The Constitutional document is not sacred," Whitehead continued. "It is the principle of religious liberty that is so important. How dare Baptists shrink from 'tinkering with the words' of the Constitution, while government officials tinker with the religious freedom rights of students and others. It is the tinkering with rights that should offend and be feared...."



## The Baptist Record

VOLUME 118 (ISSN-0005-5778) NUMBER 45  
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$7.35 a year payable in advance. Second class postage paid at Jackson, Mississippi. The Baptist Record is a member of Southern Baptist Press Association.

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Postmaster: Send changes of address to The BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205. Send news, communication, and address changes to The Editor, BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205 (601) 968-3800.



# Landrum Leavell to retire Dec. 31 from New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Landrum P. Leavell II, president of New Orleans Seminary since January 1975, announced his retirement to the seminary's trustee executive committee Dec. 13.

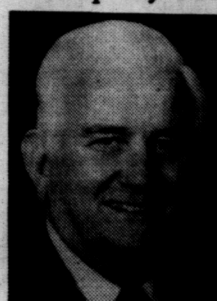
He said he will retire Dec. 31, 1994, but subsequently agreed to the committee's request to remain as interim president until a successor is chosen.

"Twenty years ago today I made the most strategic decision of my ministerial calling," Leavell said in his retirement statement to trustees. "I decided... to become president of my alma mater, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. It was a decision that God has confirmed every day of these 20 years."

Now, Leavell said, he will "once again change the focus of my ministry. You have known for three years of my intention to retire before age 70. You sent a committee to ask me to stay til age 70, and then go on a year-by-year basis. I was deeply gratified by this encouragement, but I am presently convinced that I am making the right decision today. This retirement will be effective Dec. 31, 1994."

Leavell told the trustee commit-

tee he would be available "to continue as needed until you name a new president and will be pleased to help my successor become



Leavell

indoctrinated, if desired, for a stated period of time in his transition."

He said he and his wife Jo Ann plan to move to Wichita Falls, Texas, in retirement "and enter the doors of ministry God opens." Leavell was pastor of First Church, Wichita Falls, prior to moving to New Orleans.

"You have given me a free hand, within the trustee adopted guidelines, in the day-to-day administration of the institution," Leavell's statement continues. "Together we have maintained a direction that has enabled us to become one of the world's largest, and maybe, the most efficiently run seminaries anywhere. It could not have been done without a united and cooperative board."

"I do not leave feeling the best days are past. It is my judgment

that the future is as bright as sunlight, and that God has an ongoing purpose for NOBTS," Leavell said.

Enrollment at New Orleans Seminary has increased more than 500% during Leavell's presidency. The seminary has expanded to include 12 extension centers across the Southeast, as well as an on-campus baccalaureate degree program with more than 500 students.

In 1991 he established on the

main campus Southern Baptist's first Center for Evangelism and Church Growth, a specialized facility and resource center which is in the process of assembling a complete collection of all available evangelism and church growth books, resources, and materials. The center also contains the latest computer software to provide churches with customized consultation and research to do demographic studies

on their areas and personalized church decadal growth studies.

The Leavells have four children: Landrum III, pastor of Royal Palms Church, Phoenix, Ariz.; Ann, whose husband, Finis Beauchamp, is pastor of First Church, Cameron, Texas; Roland II, president of Rives and Leavell, a church bond company in Jackson; and David, pastor of First Church, Hobart, Okla.

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

## The Baptist Record

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### Foreign Mission Board taps two Mississippi couples

Two couples with Mississippi ties were among 44 people named missionaries by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Dec. 13 at Colonial Heights (Va.) Baptist Church.

Lawrence W. (Larry) and Alicia Braswell will live in south Brazil, where he will start and develop churches. Thomas E. and Tina Ferguson will live in Togo, where he will develop music programs in churches.

Braswell has been pastor of Trinity Church in Oak Grove, La., since 1991. Braswell is the son of Glenda Braswell of Boyle and Ralph Braswell of Birmingham, Ala. He considers Boyle his hometown and First Church there his home church. He also was minister of youth and activities at First Church in Aberdeen.

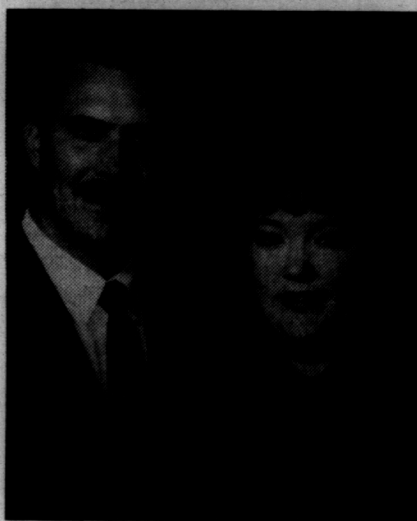
He received the bachelor of science degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville and the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

Born in Vicksburg, Mrs. Braswell, the former Alicia Sellers, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Sellers of Brandon. Her father is the Annuity Board representative for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. She considers Brandon her hometown and First Church there her home church.

She received the bachelor of science degree and the teaching certificate from Mississippi State University in Starkville. Currently she is a piano teacher in Oak Grove. She earlier was a high school teacher and microbiologist with Golden Triangle Regional Medical Center in Columbus.

The Braswells have three children: Lawrence Wray II, Andrew Sellers, and Caitlyn Alicia. The family will go to Rockville, Va., in March for a seven-week orientation before leaving for the field.

Since 1991, the Fergusons have lived in Pulaski, Va., where he has



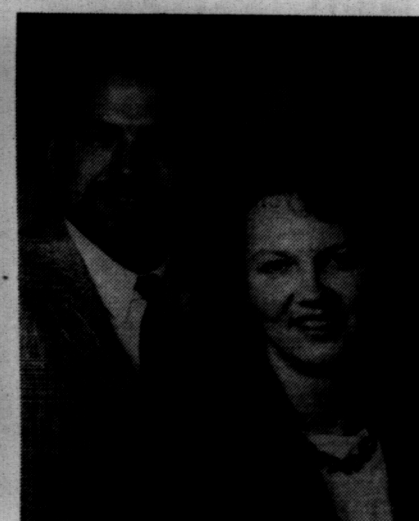
Larry and Alicia Braswell

been associate pastor of music and youth at Memorial Church.

While growing up, Ferguson lived in Long Beach and considers First Church there his home church. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Ferguson, currently live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

He received the bachelor of music education degree from University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and the master of music degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

Ferguson was a Foreign Mission Board journeyman in Kenya and a



Thomas and Tina Ferguson

Baptist Student Union summer missionary in Virginia and New York.

Mrs. Ferguson is a native of Virginia. Her mother, Mildred Phillips, lives in Pulaski. She received the bachelor of science degree from Roanoke College in Salem, Va. Since 1992 she has been a laboratory coordinator at Hoover Color Corp. in Hiwassee, Va.

The Fergusons will go to Rockville, Va., in January for a seven-week orientation before leaving for the field.

### Foreign Mission Board kicks off 150th year, marks record numbers

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board got a head start on celebrating its 150th anniversary by restating its missions vision and surpassing 500 annual missionary additions for the first time in its history.

Trustees of the board, which turns 150 in 1995, adopted vision and mission statements recommended by FMB President Jerry Rankin and appointed 44 missionaries at its Dec. 12-14 meeting in Richmond, Va.

The appointments pushed the total of new missionaries named in 1994 to 534, breaking 1993's record of 498. That includes 255 career and associate missionary appointments — the highest in seven years — and a record 279 two-year International Service Corps workers and journeymen.

The two-year worker total tops the 1993 record of 275 and will increase, since more will be assigned before Dec. 31. The board's record for career and associate appointments was set in 1985 with 304. The board's overall missionary total now stands at 4,078.

The vision and mission statements — which include input from missionaries, trustees, staff and others — focus on harmonizing board strategies with what God is doing in the world, Rankin said. They will be followed later by a set of basic principles still being developed.

In other action, trustees:

— joined the Home Mission Board in rejecting a motion, referred from the June 1994 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in

Orlando, Fla., that the two agencies conduct a three-year pilot project reversing the seasons when they receive their major mission offerings — the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

— announced 52 FMB trustees responded to a personal challenge to support the Lottie Moon offering by pledging a total of \$53,561 — an average of \$1,030 each.

— honored 10 retiring staff members with 275 years of combined service.

They are Clark Scanlon, 66, assistant senior vice president for overseas, with 41 years on the mission field and FMB staff; Don Listrom, 64, director, missionary benefits and tax department, 40 years on staff; Alan Compton, 65, vice president for communications, 34 years on the field and staff; Leland Webb, 62, editor of The Commission magazine, 30 years on staff.

Also, Truman Smith, 65, senior family consultant, 30 years on staff; Bob Stanley, 65, director, news and information office, 28 years on the field and staff; Trudy English, 66, associate area director for Middle America and Canada, 27 years on staff; Judy Robertson, 55, associate area director for East Asia, 20 years on the field and staff; Sue Hertzler, 55, computer analyst, 13 years on staff; and Bob Ethridge, 55, assistant vice president for strategy and marketing in the office of communications, 11 years on staff.

### New postal increase

The U.S. Postal Service has announced a 20-25% increase for second-class mailers. The Baptist Record is mailed via second class, and expects its postal costs to increase by approximately 20%, beginning Jan. 1, 1995.

There will be no subscription cost increase. However, The Baptist Record will have to pass the mailing cost increase on to its subscribers. For those churches subscribing through the Every Family Plan, (now \$5.40 annually per subscriber), the price of the paper will remain the same, but the postage increase will be attached to each month's bill. This means that under the Every Family Plan, the paper will cost 12 cents per copy, plus 2 cents for the new postal increase.

Costs under the Budget Plan (now \$5.52 annually per subscriber), Club Plan (now \$6.72 annually per subscriber), and individual rates (\$7.35 annually) will also remain the same, but the postage increase will be added.





**TIME FOR TALK** — Tensions have eased in Gaza after the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. So Southern Baptist worker Glenn Glover (center) can chat without fear with two young Palestinian men he had just met on the street. His Southern Baptist colleagues also are taking advantage of the welcome peace to form new relationships. The portrait at left is the well-known face of Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yassar Arafat, now head of self-rule government in Gaza. See story below. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)

## Peace still elusive in land where Prince of Peace was born

WASHINGTON (ABP) — Peace and Christmas go together. But as the season approaches, peace remains uncertain in the land where Christ was born.

An Oct. 26 accord with Jordan marked the first treaty between Israel and an Arab state since the 1979 treaty with Egypt. But still unresolved in the Mideast peace process are thorny issues related to access to holy sites for the three major world religions which claim the territory as their land of origin.

Perhaps the most contentious issue — the sovereignty of East Jerusalem, currently under Israeli control — is not even scheduled for discussion until the third year of the peace process.

Three major world religions — Judaism, Islam, and Christianity — place claims of religious significance on East Jerusalem. Proponents of the various faiths have fought over it for centuries, mingling competing claims of a divine right to possess the land with blood.

Tempering those ancient hostilities with modern political realities will not be easy, observers agree. But they differ on how best to resolve the conflict.

Bill O'Brien, a 26-year veteran of Southern Baptist foreign missions, said he hopes the recent signing of the peace treaty in Jordan will bring "true shalom — totally harmonious living."

But the key to peaceful co-existence is "mutual recognition," said O'Brien, adding that proprietary ownership of the old section of Jerusalem by any group could be detrimental to peace.

"I would hate to see Jerusalem become a political capital," said O'Brien, director of the Global Center at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

O'Brien, who serves on the steering committee of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, favors a joint council representing all three religions that would guarantee access for all religious pilgrims to the region.

Regardless of who controls Jerusalem, there should be safe, free, and easy access to the holy sites for all religions, said Charles Kimball, associate professor of religion at Furman University in Greenville, S.C.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate claims to the region in and around Jerusalem, and the issue will not be resolved until some measure of "approximate justice" for all can be found, Kimball said.

"Both sides will have to get enough (from negotiations) that they can live with," Kimball said.

Because sovereignty cuts to the very national identity of both groups, Kimball said Palestinians will not be satisfied simply to visit Jerusalem. "They feel that it is their land."

Peaceful co-existence will depend on trust, and some kind of

Palestinian authority related to Jerusalem will be in everyone's interest, Kimball said. He suggested that perhaps Jerusalem could be a joint capital of the two states, or an international city.

Avi Granot, counselor for inter-religious affairs at the Israeli embassy in Washington, said that because of the intensity and divisiveness of the issue, negotiators hope to settle other matters, such as water rights, before tackling a permanent solution to Jerusalem control.

By the third year, the rationale goes, both sides will have too much at stake to fail to settle on Jerusalem.

The Israeli official said history has shown that the only time all the sites have been open to every faith is when East Jerusalem was under Israeli control. Each religion should have the responsibility for

home missions to renew their support through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering."

The committee was requested in June to study how the board should cooperate with state conventions that send designated funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or other non-SBC entities.

Board Chairman Bob Curtis, a pastor from Ballwin, Mo., said there was a tremendous misconception about the intent of the committee. "We... will not be a party to any body... that attempts to tear down the Cooperative Program support system."

Board member Greg Martin, pastor of Commission Road Church, Long Beach, who requested the study, said he was satisfied with the report.

Begaye's appointment was

prompted by the retirement of Oscar Romo who leaves at the end of the year with 46 years of home missions service. Romo, along with nine other retiring staff members with 223 total years of home mission service, were recognized at the board meeting.

The other retirees and their current positions with the HMB are: Everett Anthony, director, metropolitan missions; J.C. Bradley, director, associational administration; Bill Donovan, director, institutional and business industrial chaplaincy; Beverly Hammack, director, missions ministries; Harold Hime, associate director, church and community ministries; Ken Neibel, associate director, new church extension; Bettye Patrick, accounts payable clerk; Nathan Porter, assistant director, church and community ministries; and Harold Wilcox, director, church and community ministries.

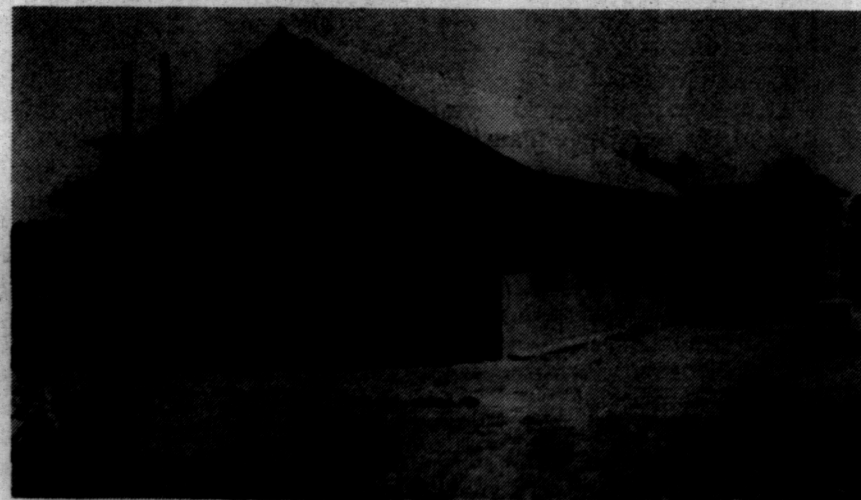
## Mississippi, Zimbabwe Baptists commemorate three-year partnership

The Mississippi Baptist Convention closed out a three-year partnership in December with the African country of Zimbabwe. In bottom right photo, Bill Causey (right), executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, accepts a gift of appreciation from A. Nyawah, president of the National Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

In bottom left photo, Issac Chigede (left), Zimbabwean church planter, presents a gift to Betty (center) and Dewey Merritt (right), who served as coordinators of the Mississippi/Zimbabwe Partnership for the past two years. The Merritts have since returned to the United States and retired to Midland, Texas.

In top photo, the church building for the Svimba congregation nears completion. The church was

formed in February 1993 and now has 150 in attendance with a number of people awaiting baptism. Church members, who made 35,000 bricks by hand, were aided in their construction by a gift from First Church, Booneville.





# Home missions volunteers start trust fund to pay for future work

ATLANTA (BP) — A band of current and former home missions volunteers has established a trust fund to support future volunteer work.

"Its purpose is to create funding for volunteers and volunteer projects that are not funded through traditional means," said Irene Bennett of Augusta, Ga.

Earnings from the trust fund, to be managed by the Southern Baptist Foundation, will be used on a variety of projects, from student summer missions to Mission Service Corps, the Home Mission

Board's volunteer program for adults serving four months or longer.

Organizers had independently considered a support fund for five years, said Bennett, a three-time summer missionary.

"The people in the group didn't know one another," she said. "It just took a while for all of us to recognize we were thinking about the same thing."

Don Hammonds, HMB associate vice president for ministry, lauded the fund as a way to get more volunteers onto the mission

field and open up areas that have been financially prohibitive, such as expensive inner-city work.

"It may allow us to go to an area that we've never been to before for lack of funds," he said. "We are very grateful that they have done this."

The fund will have a variety of uses, from paying transportation costs to get volunteers to a mission site to buying support materials for the work to be done.

While the fund is independent from the Home Mission Board, directors of the three HMB volunteer departments — student, volunteer projects, and Mission Service Corps — will submit an annual prioritized list of volunteer needs not funded by the board's budget, said Elmer Goble, HMB director of the volunteer projects department.

The Baptist Volunteer Mission Fund will be directed by its six founders. In addition to Bennett is her husband Phil, minister of education at First Church of Augusta, Ga.; Tom Logue, retired director of Baptist Student Unions for Arkansas; Ira Craft, vice president of the Cecil B. Day Foundation; Cliff Farmer, of Olympia Valley, Calif., an entrepreneur who has hosted several volunteers; and Glen Marshall, of Ellijay, Ga., a Mission Service Corps volunteer for the Baptist Convention of New York.

Bennett noted the fund was not a reaction to such recent events as the board's 6% budget reduction for 1995.

Anyone wanting more information about the fund can contact Bennett in Augusta at (706) 737-2537.

## Assemblies of God pastor held for trying to convert Muslims

CAIRO, Egypt (BP) — Assemblies of God pastor William Gayyid is being held in prison, accused of trying to convert Muslims to the Christian faith, according to church leaders in the Middle East.

Gayyid, said to be about 50 years old, was arrested in late November as he prayed with three Muslim women after a morning worship service at his church in the Wiley area of Greater Cairo. Police at first released him, but then re-arrested him about half an hour later.

Gayyid is being held in Tora Prison in Cairo, described by Christians who have been held there as "a hellhole," where torture, starvation, and other rough treatment are common. Gayyid is being held in the worst of two wings in the prison, according to his lawyer who visited him the week of Dec. 5. The lawyer told

church leaders that Gayyid's condition is "not good," but provided no further details.

Former prisoners say often eight men are forced to sleep together in a 6-foot-square room and are given stagnant water to drink. The prison does not feed prisoners and relatives and friends are required to provide food.

Assemblies of God leaders in the United States, England, and Sweden, and as far away as Australia and Korea, have called for Christians around the world to pray for Gayyid.

Church leaders do not know if charges have been filed against the pastor. Gayyid's son is being allowed to take clothes and food to his father every other day but has not been allowed to see him. Church leaders say this supports their fears that Gayyid is being mistreated.

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## Metro's Webster retires

James Webster, third from left, director of church services for Metro (Hinds-Madison) Association, was honored at a retirement reception Dec. 11 for his 14 years of service in that position. The reception was held in the association's building in Jackson. With him are from left, Charles Gentry, moderator for the association; Webster's wife Katherine; and Eddie Hamilton, director of missions.

## "Friends Forever" training materials help ID lost friends

ATLANTA (BP) — To begin a new witnessing training workshop titled "Friends Forever," Paul McClung asked the 34 participants to list all the lost people they knew. The most names anyone had written was five, said McClung, associate director of evangelism for Arkansas Southern Baptists.

At the end of the six-hour course, participants each listed names of 50 to 70 non-Christians.

People who participate in "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now" can use "Friends Forever" to help them think of 60 people who need to accept Christ, said Jack Smith, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board personal evangelism department and author of "Friends Forever."

"Here's Hope. Share Jesus

Now" is the simultaneous witnessing effort for Christians to share Christ 60 times between Jan. 9 and March 9.

"Friends Forever" includes 12 study units designed to be taught in 30 minutes each. The units offer ways to approach people in different settings, from home to the neighborhood to the workplace.

The material also addresses the danger of waiting too long to share Christ with a non-Christian friend.

The six-hour course is considered "entry-level personal evangelism training for the 90% of Christians who never enroll in a soul-winning training course," Smith said.

The Friends Forever book is available from HMB customer services, 1-800-634-2462.

## Top Stories of 1994

1. Trustees fire Southwestern Seminary president Russell Dilday as part of conservative transition.
2. SBC messengers order convention agencies to reject funds from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
3. True Love Waits garners national attention with thousands of chastity cards staked around Washington Monument.
4. Southern Baptist Annuity Board faces double threats from SBC Executive Committee.
5. Jim Henry, pastor of First Church, Orlando, Fla., elected president of Southern Baptist Convention.
6. Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions tops \$83,000,000 nationwide.
7. Ken Hemphill selected as new president of Southwestern Seminary.
8. Southern Seminary professor Molly Marshall resigns under pressure from seminary President Al Mohler.
9. Jack Brymer, editor of Florida Baptist newspaper, resigns after complaining of harassment from oversight committee.
10. Lillehammer Baptists go for the gold at Winter Olympics.

Honorable mentions: Cooperative Program sets nationwide record of \$142,000,000 in 1994; Texas messengers redefine Cooperative Program; Southern Baptist Home Mission Board tackles universalism, Free Masonry, and relationships with cooperating states.

1. Trustees claim authority over Mississippi College (MC).
2. MC trustees and Mississippi Baptist Convention officers negotiate compromise regarding MC trustee takeover.
3. (tie) Brandon teen Brad Boatner dies in vehicle accident during Honduran mission trip.
- Mississippi residents report casinos bring prosperity to some, woe to others.
5. Mississippi Baptist Youth Night sets attendance record (20,000) for second straight year.
6. Tennessean Howell W. Todd chosen new president of Mississippi College.
7. Mississippi Baptist disaster teams respond to Calif. quake, Delta ice storm.
8. Baptists from 17 state churches travel to Japan to build two churches.
9. Camp Sister Spirit lesbian retreat stirs ire of Jones County residents; local Baptists appear on national television.
10. State Cooperative Program gifts show annual increase but fall short of goal.

Honorable mentions: True Love Waits judged a success in Miss.; Resigned MC President Lewis Nobles goes public on tabloid TV; Students at Wingfield High School in Jackson battle superintendent and school board over prayer issue.

Source: non-scientific poll of editorial staff of The Baptist Record.



# Angels are for real, scholars agree, but Bible is fuzzy on what they do

(ABP) — Angels appear throughout the Bible, but Christians in this century — particularly Protestants — have been hesitant to talk about them or study them.

In 1975, Billy Graham was preparing a sermon on angels and discovered scant resources in his library on the topic.

So he researched and wrote his own book, called *Angels: God's Secret Agents*. It became a national best-seller and now has returned to prominence. This fall, it was the fourth-best-selling non-fiction hardback book in Christian book stores nationwide.

Graham's book and interviews with several theologians and students of angelology provide a basic outline of orthodox Christian beliefs about angels. But the subject still has few clearly defined parameters of what is orthodox and what is not.

Baptist scholars generally agree on at least three points, however:

— Angels are an obvious part of Scripture, and their existence cannot be denied.

— The role of angels is not clearly described in the Bible.

— The Bible affirms the existence of both good angels and fallen angels, or demons.

"There's a great deal of ambiguity, and I think purposefully so," said Gerald Keown, an Old Testament professor at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "We do not have a clear-cut biblical perspective that would define the role of angels. I think this is a subject intentionally left shrouded in mystery."

One of his colleagues, New Testament professor Cary Newman, believes the mystery of angels also may have been left a mystery to avoid the human temptation to worship angels over Jesus Christ.

Even most Christian-oriented people on the modern angel-promotion circuit readily acknowledge

this danger. The Bible includes several instances, they note, where people who attempt to worship angels are rebuked.

The most notable example is recorded in Revelation 22, where the apostle John, upon being returned to the island of Patmos after his revelation of end times, falls down to worship the angel who has escorted him. "Do not do it," the angel says. "Worship God."

Angels are essentially good beings who may be used for evil purposes, Newman said. "I wouldn't pray to an angel; I pray to Jesus. I don't seek the enablement of an angel; I seek the enablement of the living Christ.... Anything you appeal to an angel to do, Christ does better."

Newman said as a pastor he would not preach a sermon series on angels or encourage his congregation to become fascinated with angels because of the danger of angel worship. "I want them to fall in love with the risen Christ" rather than angels, he said.

Another New Testament scholar, Clint Arnold of Biola University, believes angel worship was the sin of the Colossian church that prompted the apostle Paul to write them with further instruction.

In Colossians 2:18, Paul writes: "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person

goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head...."

Arnold has studied every available fragment from Asia Minor with an inscription related to angels that was written during Paul's time. His research and view of the Colossian heresy will be published in a forthcoming book titled *The Colossian Syncretism*.

**G**lory to God  
in the highest,  
and on  
earth, peace, good  
will toward men.

— Luke 2:14



## ANGELS

From page 1

said. Universalism is the belief that all people will go to heaven, or that all spiritual roads lead to God.

The "folk religion" fostered by the modern discussion of angels "tends to encourage Baptists and other Christians to become universalists," Smith said. "Wherever they see angels, they tend to give them credibility."

"We see angels as a common denominator of the religions of the world," said Vephula, publisher of *Angel Times*. She considers herself a Christian and a Baptist but remains open to other religions.

Likewise, Curry, founder of Twenty-eight Angels Inc., identifies herself as a Christian but believes angels carry God's message to people of all faith groups. "All the religions should be working together," she said.

While people like Vephula and Curry have gotten into the angel business with an inclusive view, others have entered with a more narrow view.

Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation, strongly emphasizes her ties to Catholicism and Christianity.

"I'm trying to educate people about who angels really are," she said. "There's so much information out there that is not biblically based."

For example, Freeman cites the wildly popular book by Betty Eadie, *Embraced by the Light*, in which Eadie tells how her life was changed by an angelic encounter.

"I'm sure she had a genuine angel experience, but it gets mixed up with her Mormon background and strange theology," Freeman said. Some Baptist scholars have criticized Eadie's book as thinly veiled

Mormon theology.

Like Freeman, Marilyn Webber got into the angel business with a desire to promote orthodox Christian views.

They met at Wheaton University, and he holds a doctorate from Midwestern Seminary, a Southern Baptist school in Kansas City, Mo. He has been pastor of several Baptist churches over the last 40 years, most recently Grand View Church in Grand Terrace, Calif.

Together, they have written *A Rustle of Angels*, which has sold 200,000 copies in hardback to date. The book includes dozens of personal stories of human encounters with angels but also a strong evangelical witness.

"There are so many myths out there and New Age ideas," Marilyn Webber said. "We decided there needed to be more of a foundational idea presented."

They decided to write the book in a popular format rather than a Bible study format so it would appeal to non-Christians as well as Christians and could be sold in secular book stores, her husband added.

The book has proven to be a good bridge to Christianity for people who are not Christians but who are interested in angels, Marilyn Webber said. She and her husband also host "angel teas" in their home, to which they invite people interested in angels for discussion and ultimately to hear a Christian witness.

"Because there's such an interest in angels outside the church, it gives Chris-

## Americans believe they have guardian angels

(ABP) — Ten years ago, Brenda Curry was living alone in a rough neighborhood of Kansas City, Mo. One night while driving home after a church activity, a blizzard stranded her a short distance from her apartment.

Remembering her surroundings and the fact a rapist was

stalking the neighborhood, she immediately closed her eyes and prayed: "Lord, I'm scared. Please help me."

Two men suddenly appeared at her car window. One was white; one was black. Both appeared to be in their 30s, she recalled, and both looked like they could blend in with the street population in downtown Kansas City.

But instead of being afraid, "the strangest peace came over me," said Curry, a Southern Baptist who now lives in Kentucky. "The first man said, 'I'm your guardian angel. Where do you need to go?'"

"I said I lived just a half a block up the road. He said, 'OK, we'll give you a push.'"

The man also instructed her, "Don't stop, and don't look back."

The men pushed the car to Curry's building, and she immediately got out to thank them. But by the time she opened the car door to speak, the men were gone.

The men left no footprints, and no tire tracks appeared in the snow. And she had parked in a large open area with no hiding places, she said.

Curry immediately believed the man's statement that he was her guardian angel, she said.

"I've been a Christian for many years, and I was raised to believe I had a guardian angel to watch over me," she said. "But I never expected to have an encounter."

Was the man really her guardian angel? And do guardian angels really exist?

A growing number of Americans believe the answer to both questions is yes. Dozens of books on the market today are filled with similar stories of human encounters with angels, mainly "guardian" angels who rescue people from peril.

Major national polls have found about 70% of American adults believe in angels. A national poll by Yankelovich Partners Inc. for Time magazine last year found 46% of Americans believe they have a guardian angel and 32% believe they have felt an angelic presence in their lives.

The Barna Research Group reports 77% of Americans believe unseen spiritual forces affect the material world.

tians a wonderful opportunity to use this interest as a beginning to witness," she said.

How to explain the current surge in interest with angels varies depending upon one's view of whom angels serve.

Curry sees the phenomenal interest as a sign of spiritual renewal across America. "This is an opportunity for us to realign our priorities and choose the pathway of the divine rather than the pathway of materialism," she said.

And she gets many calls from Baptists, she added, who are seeking a deeper level of spirituality.

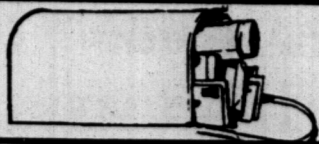
Freeman said the increasing interest in angels is "part of a great revival of spirituality in America."

The Webbers also see signs of increased spiritual interest but worry that too many people may latch onto angels and not see the God the angels serve.

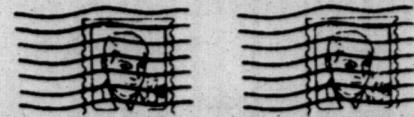
"Times are tough, and in tough times people are more open to the spiritual," William Webber said. "Angels are a way of finding hope and being spiritual."

"But God's angels always want to point to Jesus Christ. For many people, unfortunately, angels become an end in themselves. A person can stop short with the angels and never come face to face with the demands of the lordship of Jesus Christ."





# Letters to the editor



## Favors prayer, but...

Editor:

As a Southern Baptist, I am in favor of school prayers, but....

As a Southern Baptist, I am opposed to prayers in schools that are ordained by, orchestrated by, or administered by political gurus who have more interest in their political haven than they have in a child's spiritual heaven.

As a Southern Baptist and as a voting citizen, I am appalled at the

actions of some of our denominational leaders promoting political parties, and worse yet, specific candidates. I am opposed to politicians and spiritual leaders playing politics with our prayers.

Many of our devout brethren and sisters have been completely misled by the skillful manipulations of these political and religious coalitions. Just to hint to them that, perhaps you might be opposed to school prayer in any form, automatically brands you a heretic. These are sincere people.

They just haven't been made aware of all the ramifications.

While it is true that many recent court decisions have seemingly appeared intent upon impeding the spread of religion in many state operated arenas, they have basically held up one of God's basic tenets: "He will not force his love upon any one that does not desire it," legislation notwithstanding.

Children can still legally and constitutionally meet in public school buildings before the school

day for organized prayer. This must be a voluntary effort and is not mandated by a congressional act or by a constitutional amendment. This prevents the school board from having to decree which prayers of which religion must be used.

It appears that our greatest problem is in explaining the awesome import of this impending legislation to our fellow brothers and sisters and to convince them in joining with all of us in voicing our opposition to any legislation or constitutional act that would use God's church and God's people to support political ends, or personal gains.

Thomas L. Parrish  
Mechanicsville, Va.  
Former member  
West Laurel Church

is unfortunately not shocking to see this attitude toward the Jewish people from some Baptist people. When Craft writes that the Jews killed Jesus, it breaks my heart. You want to know who killed the Jewish Messiah? I did, so did we all. God the Father had a plan — a way that we might be redeemed. A perfect sacrifice, the God-Man Jesus Christ. Since none of us will ever be perfect, through his death we may put on Christ.

I thank God that he sent his Son — the Creator of the universe — to die on that cross, as horrible as it was. Now I may enter into God's presence when I die. Don't you know no one killed Jesus? He laid down his life — no man could take it from him.

Always remember, Gentiles: we have nothing to brag about. We were grafted in. God has not forsaken his chosen people, the Jews. He has a definite plan for these people — just like he has a plan for the church.

If people would open their eyes, prophecy is being fulfilled now.

Please know my sins put Jesus Christ to death, and so did yours. Praise God he made a way for us.

Kathy Rich  
Byhalia

## Threat to missions

Editor:

I am appalled at the resurgence of five-point Calvinism within our denomination. This theology, which teaches that God predestined some to be saved and go to heaven, and others to be lost and go to hell, has no basis in Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ died for all people, and issues to everyone the call to salvation. But he does not force anyone to accept his gift of salvation. He gave to each person free will. Some will accept God's gift of salvation; others will reject it.

Five-point Calvinism poses a serious threat to missions and evangelism, which Southern Baptists have long been, and still are, noted for. Five-point Calvinism says that since God predestined some to go to heaven and others to be lost and go to hell, why evangelize the lost? If God chooses to save those people, then he will, and he does not need our help in doing so, the five-point Calvinists say. If that theology becomes the dominant theology in the SBC, then we will cease to be missions-minded people. If we cease to be missions-minded people, our denomination will eventually cease to be.

Kevin Waller  
Bude

## Jews not murderers

Editor:

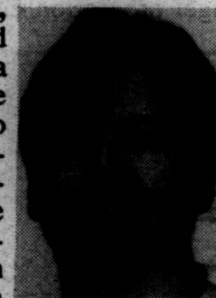
I am responding to the letter written by Miley Craft (Dec. 8). It

## Dickens to go to WMU

Teresa Dickens, advertising coordinator/news writer for *The Baptist Record*, has resigned after two and a half years in the position to become communications specialist with the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) in Birmingham, Dickens Ala.

She will begin her duties with WMU effective Jan. 3.

Dickens, a Saucier native, came to *The Baptist Record* from *Word & Way*, the newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention. She is a journalism graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and holds the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.



## HEALTHCAREING

# FOR THE RECORD

## MBMC'S Emphasis Reflects Mission Of Christian Service.

*MBMC Staff Focuses On Community Service, At Christmas And Throughout The Year.*

At Christmastime, there always seems to be a special focus on reaching out to the community around us. Mississippi Baptist Medical Center is no exception. Our physicians, employees and volunteers work to join in the spirit of giving as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

We work to brighten the holidays for our patients and their families through special Christmas decorations and performances in our lobby. This year, our employees, members of several local church choirs, and handbell performers will share their music throughout the holiday season. Our life-sized nativity scene provides a sacred reminder of the first Christmas.

As an outreach to less fortunate families, many of our hospital departments have adopted local families for the holidays — providing groceries

and gifts to help parents and children in need.

Our employees also continue their support of the Baptist Children's Village and The Crestwood Baptist Mission — an MBMC tradition that goes back many years. MBMC families collect and bring in an assortment of canned goods, clothing and toys to contribute to these fellow Baptist ministries.

But our outreach to the community doesn't end when the decorations and ornaments are taken down. Throughout the year, we work to fulfill our mission in the Jackson area through public education and community service programs. Our goal is to provide a Christian atmosphere for the healing of the mind, body and spirit. And that's a goal we strive to reach all year round.



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## LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ed.D.  
Minister of Counseling  
First Church, Jackson

*LifeAnswers is on temporary hiatus. The column will return in the January 12 issue of The Baptist Record.*

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.



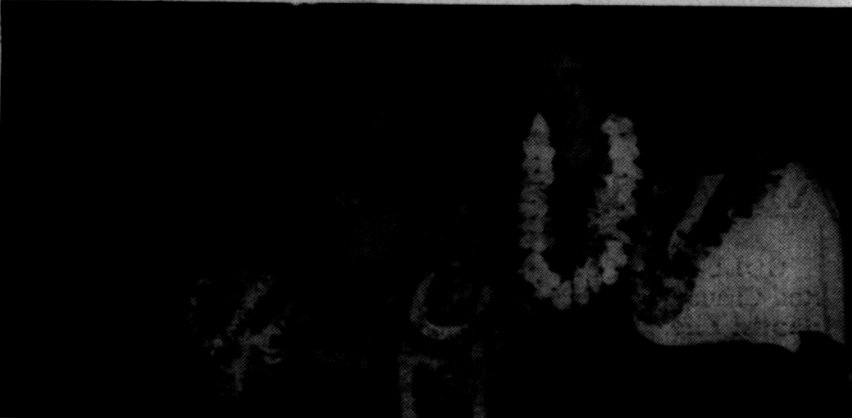
## Just for the Record



**East Booneville Church, Booneville,** recently held a note burning ceremony to celebrate the retirement of the debt on its education building and church van. Construction on that facility began in November 1992. Building committee members who participated in the note burning (above, left to right) were Robert Dodson, chairman; Ronald Michael; Martha Shields; Debbie Barrett; Jim Holcomb, pastor; and Don Horn.



**First Church, Vardaman,** dedicated its new church bus — debt-free — on Oct. 23. Senior adults, some of whom are pictured with the new vehicle, led the church in fund raising.



**Oakland Church, Walnut,** recently held its third annual workers appreciation banquet. This year's theme was a Hawaiian luau. Chefs and hostesses (above, left to right) were Christine Richerson, Diane Melton, Kay Winter, and Alice Scott. Assisting them were "hula girls" Candice Melton and Kacey Weatherly. James C. Melton is pastor.



**First Church, Tutwiler,** recently held a recognition service for its RAs. Those honored were (left to right): back row, Ronnie Smith, leader; J.J. Westbrook, assistant; John Gee, leader; middle row, Chance Smith, David Dunavent, Tres Barnard, Chad Barnard, T.A. Jennings; front row, Chris Barnard, John Philip Gee, Blake Smith, and Joel Hays. J.B. Hays Jr. is pastor.



**Phillipston Church (LeFlore Association)** recently won the efficiency banner at the association's M-Night. Members of the Discipleship Training program who were present at M-Night (above, left to right) were: front row, Douglas Hodges, Tyler Hall; second row, Nikki Felts, Jennifer Hall, Nikki Hodges; third row, Kelli Bruce, Inez Alderman, Bobbie Jeffers; fourth row, Toshia Felts, Crickett Sims, Martha Brown, Margie Wilburn; fifth row, Eloise Gore, Grace Alderman, Pam Gregg, Jerry Hall, Chris Hall; sixth row, Discipleship Training director Marvin Alderman; Bobbie Gore, Michelle Melton, Lester Jeffers, Ossia Alderman, Billy Shaw, and Miriam Myers.

**South Manor Church in Roswell, N.M.,** is planning a celebration to mark its 50th anniversary on Dec. 3, 1995, and wants to notify former members. Contact the church at P.O. Box 1502, Roswell, NM 88202; phone (505) 622-6072.

**Centrifuge and Crosspoint** summer camps for youths will be held at the University of Mobile in 1995. Sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board, camp reservations are now being accepted. Contact Janice Pittman at the University of Mobile, (800) 946-7267.

**Woolmarket Church, Biloxi,** will hold only a 10 a.m. worship on Christmas Day. Randall Rich is pastor. For more information, call the church at (601) 392-5622.

**The Homes of Grace** will have a homecoming service at the Home of Grace Chapel in Vancleave on Jan. 15 at 2:30 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rex Yancey, president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and pastor of First Church, Pascagoula. Music will be provided by the Joyful Sound women's ensemble of Wade Church, Pascagoula. Twenty-four new members of the Homes of Grace board of directors will be introduced, and the various shelter directors will give reports. Bill Barton, founder, is now pastor of Wade Church.

**Mississippi College's Division of Continuing Education** is offering a variety of programs for adults in the spring of 1995. Applications are now being accepted for activities that begin in January: Wordperfect for 5.1 DOS, Home Garden Fruits and Berries, Flower Gardening, Fun with the Guitar, Financial Planning for Single People, and Financial Strategies for Successful Retirement. For more information, call the Division of Continuing Education at (601) 925-3831.

## Mississippians drafted for hospital exec. committee

Cameron Dean of Tribbett was elected Dec. 13 as chairman of the board of trustees for Memphis-based Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc.

Dean, a Delta farmer and cotton ginner for 45 years, is a member of First Church, Leland, where he serves as deacon, church treasurer, and as a member of the finance committee.

Mississippians elected to serve with Dean on the system's executive committee include John Keeton of Grenada and Clarence Stanford of Ripley.

Keeton is a tree farmer, retired attorney, and former state senator.

He is a deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Church, Grenada.

Stanford has been in private dental practice in Ripley since 1963 and is a past member of the board of trustees of Blue Mountain College, the Baptist-affiliated school in northeast Mississippi. He is a Sunday School teacher at First Church, Ripley.

Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc. is affiliated with the state Baptist conventions of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. The organization presently comprises 30 corporations, 16 hospitals, 3,800 beds, 2,500 physicians, and 10,000 employees.

## NOBTS offers training opportunities in Mississippi

Registration is open for second semester classes offered in Mississippi by New Orleans Seminary. Three programs of training are available for men and women unable to attend classes as full-time students on the New Orleans campus.

For more information write the Extension Center Office at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126-4858; or call 1-800-662-8701, ext. 3323.

**Associate degree classes** meet every Monday at Broadmoor Church, Jackson. Qualified students may enroll on the first day of class for the associate in Christian education degree. Spring semester courses (Jan. 23-May 15) are as follows: 1-3:30 p.m.: "Christian Doctrine," taught by Earl Kelly; 4-6:30 p.m.: "Introduction to Church Administration," taught by Julius Thompson; 7-9:30 p.m.: "Interpreting Exodus," taught by Jack Glaze.

For further information contact Chester Vaughn, 268 Northpointe Pkwy., Jackson, MS 39211-2412; or call (601) 956-6285.

**Master's degree classes** meet every Monday in Provine Chapel on the Mississippi College campus. Third term courses (Jan. 23-March 13) are as follows: 1-5 p.m.: "Evangelism," taught by Argile Smith; 6-10 p.m.: "Introduction to the New Testament," taught by Gene Henderson.

Fourth term courses (March 27-May 15) are as follows: 1-5 p.m.: "History of the Baptists," taught by Al James; 6-10 p.m.: "Introduction to the New Testament," taught by Gene Henderson.

For further information contact

Fuller Saunders, 5731 Pepper Ridge Rd., Jackson MS 39211-3125; or call (601) 957-2670.

A Christian Education Associate Program is also offered by NOBTS in Mississippi. This program is designed to train laypersons to serve as part-time educational workers in churches on a volunteer or paid basis. Classes meet two hours one evening each week in eight-week terms.

Courses will be offered at three locations in Mississippi during the spring semester: Broadmoor Church, Jackson; Antioch Church, Columbus; and First Church, Purvis.

The third term course (Jan. 23-March 13) is as follows: "Survey of SBC Curriculum," taught by Chester Vaughn in Jackson; Sammy Crawford in Columbus; and Ken Rhodes in Purvis.

The fourth term course (March 27-May 15) is as follows: "Age-Group Principles of Teaching/Learning," taught by Keith Wilkinson in Jackson; Sammy Crawford in Columbus; and Ken Rhodes in Purvis.

For additional information contact Chester Vaughn, 268 Northpointe Pkwy., Jackson, MS 39211-2412; or call (601) 956-6285.

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**BUS FOR SALE:** Blue Bird, 46-passenger, Good Mechanical shape, 1972 model, Needs paint and upholstery work. \$6,000. Call J.E. Sims, Immanuel Baptist Church, Columbus, MS (601) 328-1668.

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## Names in the News

**Gerald and Glenda Davis**, missionaries to the Philippines, are in the States (address: 520 Magazine St., Tupelo, MS 38801). He is a native of Carrollton, Ala. The former Glenda Brooks of Mississippi, she was born in Marks, and grew up in Batesville.

**Duane and Sandy Hammack**, missionaries to Hong Kong, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service (address: 169 Boundary St., Kowloon, Hong Kong). He was born and reared in Natchez. The former Sandy Lyle, she was born in Jackson, and grew up in Levittown, N.Y., and Atlanta. Both consider Jackson their hometown.

**Earl and Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries to Ghana, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service (address: Baptist Medical Centre, Box 50, Accra, Ghana). A native of Mississippi, he was born in McComb and

considers Summit his hometown. She is the former Ramona Johnson of Little Rock, Ark.

**Allan and Sue Ellen Myers**, missionaries to Nigeria, are on the field (address: P.O. Box 310, Gombe, Bauchi State, Nigeria). Born in Mendenhall, he grew up in Nigeria and considers West Point his hometown. She is the former Sue Ellen Kidd of New Iberia, La.

**Roger and Penny Stacy**, missionaries to Brazil, are in the States (address: 2225 Campground Rd., Pontotoc, MS 38863). They are natives of Mississippi. Both consider Pontotoc their hometown. The former Penny Jamison, she was born in Okolona.

**Bill and Carolyn Smith**, missionaries to Brazil, have retired from the field and now live in Long Beach (address: 307 Lynwood Circle, Long Beach, MS 39560).

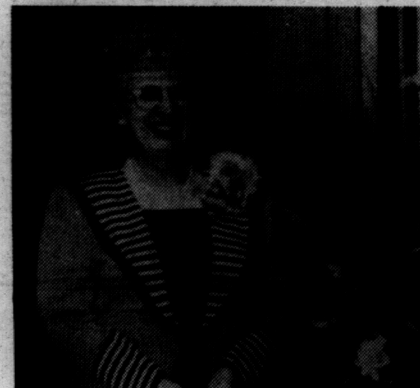
**Wilma Irene "Billie" Barrows**, 69, of Greenville, S.C., died of cancer Dec. 8 at her home. She was the wife of Cliff Barrows, vice chairman of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). The Barrows met Billy Graham in 1945 and formed the first musical team of what was to later become the BGEA. For five years, Mrs. Barrows traveled with her husband, playing the piano and organ at the early Billy Graham crusades. Her memorial service was held Dec. 12 at Taylors First Church, S.C. She was buried at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, N.C.

**Barbara Epperson**, emeritus Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, died Dec. 9 in Joplin, Mo. She was 73. Epperson was appointed as a missionary to Nigeria in 1953 by the Foreign Mission Board. She worked at the Baptist Welfare Centre in Ire before assuming responsibilities with Baptist Press in Nigeria. Funeral services were held Dec. 13 at First Church, Miami, Mo.

**Jim and Diane Heckman** of Biloxi have begun a new work as Mission Service Corps volunteers. They now direct East Howard Center, which meets in the facilities of East Howard Church. The center ministers to low-income, mostly Vietnamese, people through English-as-a-second language classes, and children's and other activities.



**New Hope Church, Foxworth**, recently honored some of its members for their perfect Sunday School attendance. They are (above, left to right): first row, Tiffany Kroner, six years; Karla Ratliff, three years; second row, Virgie Lee Pounds, three years; Bonnie Pittman, five years; Mitch Ratliff, four years; Gail Campbell, one year; third row, B.B. Stringer, 39 years; Jimmy Thomas, 25 years; and Sherrell Magee, 13 years.



**Nancy Parish** was recently honored by the Covington and Jefferson Davis Association for her 10 years of service as associational secretary. Ken Stringer is director of missions.

## Chaney is new Md./Del. editor

**COLUMBIA, Md. (ABP)** — Ron Chaney was elected editor of *Baptist Life*, news journal for the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, by the two-state convention's General Mission Board Dec. 12.

Chaney, 31, has been associate editor of the Maryland/Delaware paper since 1991 and has served as acting editor since November 1993.

In the past year, the 76-year-old paper has undergone a name change and a redesign emphasizing local news and downplaying controversy. For the last several years the paper was called the *Baptist True Union* and before that, for most of its existence, the *Maryland Baptist*.

A native of Meridian, Chaney is a graduate of Mississippi State University and Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Chaney is married to the former Karen Meurer, a native of Terre Haute, Ind. She also is a graduate of Southern Seminary.

He succeeds Bob Allen, who left the paper after five years as editor to join the staff of Associated Baptist Press news agency in Jacksonville, Fla.

**Becky and Bill Baker** were recently honored by West Ripley Church with a pastor appreciation day. The occasion was Bill Baker's 15th anniversary as pastor. The church presented the Bakers matching watches and a money tree, among other personal gifts. Baker was also presented a plaque of resolutions by Ripley's mayor on behalf of the mayor and board of aldermen. Bill McCreary, director of missions for Benton-Tippah Association, and James Travis of Blue Mountain College, participated in the day's program of activities.

## J. Northcutt dies at 80

**FORT WORTH (BP)** — Jesse Northcutt, preaching professor and former administrator at Southwestern Seminary, died Dec. 13 at age 80 at All Saints Hospital, Fort Worth, Texas, due to complications of Parkinson's disease. Funeral services were held Dec. 17 at Gambrell Street Church, adjacent to the seminary campus.

Northcutt was a member of Southwestern's faculty from 1939 until his retirement in 1984. He served as the seminary's vice president for academic affairs from 1973-79 after 20 years as dean of the school of theology.

## Staff Changes

**David Stephens** has been called to **Bethel Church, Columbus** (Lowndes Association) as minister of music.

**Fredonia Church, Union County**, has called **Joe Herndon** as pastor. He previously served Ingram Church, Prentiss County. Herndon is a native of Pontotoc and is a graduate of Blue Mountain College.

**Eastside Church, Pearl**, has called **Rob Burns** as pastor. He previously served Eastside Church, Belzoni.

**Crooked Creek Church, Silver Creek** (Lawrence Association), has called **Mike Grenn** as pastor, effective Dec. 25. The Lincoln native attends Mississippi College and previously served Enon Church.



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**HELP FOR BOSNIA** — Pastor Nikola Skrinjaric (left) and co-pastor Karmelo Kresonja of the Mostar Evangelical Church in Bosnia sort through food bought with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board world hunger funds. Bosnians suffering from the division created by war come regularly to the church, a distribution point for relief brought in by Croatian Baptists. It includes rice, sugar, macaroni, flour, sardines, canned meats and substitutes, beans, and milk powder. Foreign Mission Board missionary Bill Steele has worked with people in the region to supply the much-needed food. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)

## Needs still great in Yugoslav war zone

**ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)** — As another grim Christmas nears in the former Yugoslavia, the need for food in Croatia continues to be as great as ever.

An estimated 300,000 Bosnian refugees are in Croatia alone, aid workers say. Numbers fluctuate constantly as Bosnians come and go, depending on how close troops are to their homes.

"What would you do if you were my age and lost everything? There are no easy answers," said Zicanovic Hlopriodor, 51. A former defense department worker, he and his wife Dika live in a rented apartment in suburban Zagreb.

Kika Hlopriodor spent two months in a concentration camp before the Red Cross helped get them out, she said. "I could see people killed every day," she recalled. Physicians or educated people were singled out for death or ill treatment, she said.

For now, the fiercest fighting continues to be in eastern Bosnia. Fighting continues in Prijedor, her hometown, she said.

The harsh realities of war have led to many psychological problems and a high rate of suicide among Bosnian refugees, she explained.

That view is supported by Enisa Curtovic, president of the Women's Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an aid organization aimed mostly at helping women — especially Muslim women driven out of Bosnia.

"They have inescapable prob-

lems," she said of the Muslim women. Many have been raped or hurt in fighting. Because of their religion, they are looked down on by others in the area, even if they are university-educated professional workers.

Using primarily funds from humanitarian organizations in Western Europe, the organization helps provide counseling, therapy, and jobs skills training to refugee women, said coordinator Emsuda Mujagic. "We aim to keep the dignity and integrity of Bosnian women," she said.

Southern Baptists have provided more than \$500,000 in food and medicine for the Yugoslavian region in the past year alone. But they have expressed long-term interest in other ways as well. This fall two new career foreign missionary couples arrived in Zagreb to begin ministry. They will join Nela Williams, a Southern Baptist missionary already there, to share the gospel and minister in the city.

One couple is Richard and Beverly Bell, parents of three children ages 9, 4, and 2. Bell has worked as a veterinarian in Ohio and Texas and earlier as a volunteer on a Southern Baptist-backed cattle project in Croatia.

Jeff and Brigitte Ritchey will focus on theological education and discipleship training. Jeff is from Texas, where he served as pastor. Brigitte is the daughter of missionaries and grew up in Zimbabwe, Africa. The Ritcheys have three children, ages 6, 4, and 1.

# Baptist money is feeding victims of Yugoslavian war

By Mike Creswell

**MOSTAR, Bosnia (BP)** — When a truckload of food sent by Southern Baptists pulls up outside a church in an apartment complex riddled with bomb holes, word spreads through the neighborhood and people quickly line up.

In moments, \$10,000 worth of flour, cooking oil, sugar, and other food is carried away by residents of Mostar, Bosnia. The money that bought the food began its trip in offering plates of Southern Baptist churches in America. At the receiving end, church workers personally hand out food to those needing it.

Over the past year, Southern Baptists have poured more than \$500,000 worth of food and medicines into this ravaged region — in a ministry to physical and spiritual needs which has preserved life and brought hope amidst destruction. The support has helped Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians alike.

By buying most foodstuffs in the area, Southern Baptist missionary Bill Steele has made the

money go as far as possible. Steele, who coordinates Southern Baptist work in southern Europe, including the former Yugoslavia area, has traveled almost non-stop over the past three years to coordinate the massive aid program.

In Mostar, Steele has worked with a small evangelical congregation of about 200 members thought to be the only active evangelical congregation in Bosnia. Mostar is encircled by high, rocky mountains and divided into three warring factions — virtually a smaller copy of better-known Sarejevo. United Nations troops have been keeping the sides apart. If those troops pull out, open warfare could return soon afterward.

The face of Mostar pastor Nikola Skrinjaric is lined with stress that comes from being a bearer of peace in a land where there is no peace. The church meets in several crude rooms of an apartment complex whose walls have several holes from artillery shells.

Once a grenade landed near him. "I thought I was dead. I was

in shock for a week," he recalled.

When Peter McKenzie, now pastor of Zagreb Baptist Church, came to lead a church service, Skrinjaric gave his testimony and a boy who heard him dedicated his life to Christ. From that simple beginning Skrinjaric began organizing a church which soon grew to more than 200 members. There would be more members but many have fled the country.

Skrinjaric has developed a 15-member leadership team to guide the congregation and has developed house churches to improve the fellowship and Bible study of members.

But for now relief work remains their central focus. Skrinjaric hopes to begin delivering food into the hard-hit Muslim community soon — a risky venture because many Croats will not approve of helping their Muslim enemies.

But the pastor is adamant. "Because of Christ, we have to do it," he said.

Creswell writes for FMB.

## Cuban couple celebrates freedom

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — For Christmas this year, a Baptist Sunday School Board employee and his wife, both Cuban refugees, are celebrating the unique gift of freedom.

Omar Fernandez, resource production manager in the BSSB Multicultural Leadership Department, saw his wife Aurelia for the first time in nearly four years this summer when she moved from Havana to Nashville.

That's how long it took the Cuban government to finally grant Aurelia Fernandez a permanent exit visa. Fernandez, an archaeologist and anthropologist, defected to the United States in 1991. Since then, he said he and Aurelia — or Yeya as he calls her — agreed to pray for her freedom at the same time every Christmas season.

The Fernandezes plan to celebrate their first Christmas together in freedom with former fellow members of International Community Church in Albuquerque, N.M., a Southern Baptist church where Fernandez was pastor when he first defected to the United States.

"They prayed for my wife's freedom for four years, and they have never met her yet. So we are going there so she can meet them and they can meet her," he said.

Fernandez was on a temporary work visa for the University of New Mexico when he asked for political asylum just four days after arriving in the United States.

This will be the first Christmas he and his wife have celebrated together in complete freedom since 1959 when the Christian holiday was banned in Cuba.

"On that year, Christmas stopped being a holiday," Fernandez said, "and became a normal

workday." Christians would be reported to the government if they were found celebrating Christmas.

"The Cuban government is not friendly with Christians celebrating Christmas. We would be reported as having ideological problems."

However, the Fernandezes continued to celebrate Christmas in secret, he said.

"We would put up a small tree — less than 2 feet tall and any kind we could find. We would

decorate it with silver balls rolled from chocolate wrappings."

The Fernandezes would then paint pine cones in different colors for their tree. On the night of Christmas, the family would gather around the dinner table, sing Christmas carols, and pray together.

"We might not have had enough food to put on the table, but celebrating Christmas was more important than eating," he said.



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## No BR December 29

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## Uniform God's great gift



By Richard Bradley  
Matthew 2

On this day of gift giving, we celebrate the greatest gift of all; God's gift of his son, Jesus Christ. When the wise men entered the house of this young family to finally view the one whose birth the star had announced, they made the appropriate response. They fell down and worshipped him. First, they gave themselves to the Messiah and then they give him their gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While the Christmas tradition of gift giving likely comes from this very event, one very important difference must be noted. We give gifts to each other, the wise men gave gifts to Jesus.

As in most celebrations related to Christianity, the secular traditions of society have tainted the true meaning of Christmas. Christ must not be left out of Christmas. God's gift of his son deserves an appropriate response of sincere worship on our part. As the wise men, we must first give ourselves to the one who has come to live and die for us.

**The wise men's quest (vv. 1-2).** During the reign of Herod, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem to worship the newborn king of the Jews.

Who were these wise men? According to Nelson's Bible Dictionary, the Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century B.C., identified the magi as a caste of Medes who had a priestly function in the Persian empire. Because they followed a star, some have suggested that they were astrologers. Whoever and whatever they were, these men were wise indeed. They spared no expense and invested perhaps years of their lives in search of the newborn king of the Jews. They sought and found Jesus. Those who are truly wise still do!

**Herod's distress and inquiry (vv. 3-6).** How different was the response of the wise men to the birth of Jesus from that of Herod. Their response was one of joy, rejoicing, worship, and gift giving. Herod's response was one of a troubled mind and murderous intent (vv. 1-12).

Troubled by the report of the wise men, Herod assembled the chief priests and the scribes and learned, according to prophecy, the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (vv. 3-6). This prophecy is found in Micah 5:2 where it is written: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (NIV).

One can easily see how this prophecy might have been troubling to Herod's already disturbed and irrational mind. Herod saw the birth of this promised one as a threat to his claim to the throne. Even though the throne was not his birthright, (he was a political appointee) Herod would still seek to hold onto it at all costs, even if it meant opposing God himself.

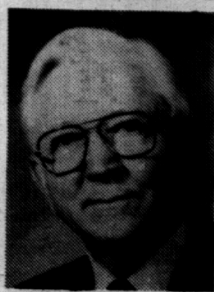
**Herod's deception (vv. 7-8).** Herod devised a plan. He sent the wise men to Bethlehem to find the child and bring him word, claiming that he also wanted to worship the child. Herod told the wise men to make a diligent search for the babe. The word for "search" means "to ascertain or interrogate." The word for "diligent" or "careful" in the NIV, means "perfectly." Literally, Herod told the wise men not to leave any stone unturned in finding this promised king of the Jews. They were to investigate the matter thoroughly, question anyone necessary, but they were to find that child. At first, this might have seemed a reasonable request from a dedicated seeker, but the wise men were soon to discover that this request for a passionate investigation was really the product of a very disturbed mind.

**The wise men's worship and departure (vv. 9-12).** The wise men followed the star to Jesus, worshipped him, and presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts, fit for a king, would be of practical benefit to the family as they fled into Egypt because of Herod's wrath. Being warned by God of Herod's true intent, the wise men went back to their homes by another route.

As so many have said before, wise men still seek Jesus. Wise men also still worship him and present themselves and their gifts to him as well. As we give gifts to each other this Christmas season, let us not miss out on giving to God that one gift which he desires more than any other; the gift of ourselves.

Bradley is pastor, Handsboro Church, Gulfport.

## Bible Book The Savior is born



By Raymond Kolb  
Luke 2

Luke the beloved physician, companion of Paul on some of his journeys, dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, was also a highly cultured scholar and a careful historian. In the first four verses of this book he tells of his purpose and the method he used in writing this book. He had the use of both oral and written reports, or sources (1:2). He wanted to give "an orderly account" to his friend, or friends. To do this he "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" (1:3), in order that he (they) might know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (1:4). This is addressed to "most excellent Theophilus" (1:3b). Theophilus means "god-lover," or "one who loves God." Whether it is addressed to one person by that name or to more than one who love God is debated, but the message is the same either way.

**The joyful birth (vv. 1-7).** Luke gives many historical and geographical details in this book and also in Acts. Some of these have been doubted and challenged as being inaccurate, but further studies have proved Luke to be completely trustworthy. It seems that his main purpose in setting forth the historical background in verses 1-3 is to explain why Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem at this particular time. They lived some 70 miles north of Bethlehem in Nazareth. The route they had to follow from one of these cities to the other was much longer and required several days on foot or riding a donkey. A census was being taken and each man was required to go to the town where his family registry was kept. Joseph and Mary were married, though they had no sexual relations until after Jesus, who had no human father, was born. The prophet Micah had stated hundreds of years earlier that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of "one who will be ruler over Israel" (Micah 5:2), and this was clearly understood to be a reference to the Messiah (Matt. 2:3-6). Pagan rulers were used in such a way that Mary and Joseph would be in Bethlehem at the right time. Prophecy was fulfilled.

Bethlehem was crowded. Joseph and Mary could not find a normal place to spend the night. Her firstborn child was born. They wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a trough where animals were fed. This was God's Son. This was Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23). He was the Savior. Can you imagine how Mary must have felt as she picked that baby up and held him in her arms?

**The joyful announcement (vv. 8-14).** This great event was not completely unnoticed. There were some simple working people, shepherds, out in the fields watching over their sheep, protecting them from any harm. "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified" (v. 9). Apparently the darkness suddenly disappeared and was replaced by a brilliant light, and there stood an angel. The angel calmed their fears. Don't be afraid. Good news. Great joy. For all people. It was God's message, spoken by his angel. Right near you, in Bethlehem, a Savior was born today. He is Christ (God's anointed one). He is Lord. If all this sounds too wonderful to be true, here is a sign for you: "You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (v. 12).

**The angel is suddenly joined by "a great company of the heavenly host" (v. 13).** The word "host" was actually a military term, normally used for a band of soldiers, but these are announcing peace "to men on whom his favor rests" (v. 14). They are praising God! What a beautiful sound that heavenly choir must have made!

**The joyful witness (vv. 15-16).** The bright light disappeared. The angels were gone. But the message stayed with those shepherds. They must go to Bethlehem immediately, not because of any doubts about what they would find, but they wanted to see the Savior themselves, and soon! So they went to town and looked until they found him. "When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about the child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (vv. 17-18). Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (v. 19). As we think of all God's wonderful blessings, and especially of our salvation through his Son, is there a better way to say, "Thank you," than to tell someone about him on Christmas Day?

Kolb is a retired missionary living in Clinton.

## Life and Work God fulfills promise



By Ruth Allen  
John 7, Matthew 2

Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands on Dec. 8, 1941. General Douglas MacArthur was commander of all U.S. Army forces in the Far East. MacArthur's forces which were quickly isolated fought heroically for four months to defend the Bataan Peninsula. In March 1942, President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to become commander of Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific. A Navy PT boat took MacArthur, his wife, and son to the southern Philippines, where they flew on to Australia. From Australia, the general spoke of his reluctance to leave his men in the Philippines; he made his famous promise, "I shall return." On Oct. 20, 1944, MacArthur fulfilled his promise and returned to the Philippines.

God made a promise to send a Savior to redeem a sinful world. Micah, the eighth-century prophet, accurately foretold the birthplace of the Savior. The inquiring magi, wise men from the east, were directed by the prophecy to the place where the infant Jesus was lying in the manger. The search of the magi was concluded, and in adoration they worshipped the one promised by God.

**Doubting the fulfillment (John 7:42-43).** Jesus had stood up and proclaimed "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink." There were some who accepted the words and authority of Jesus as fulfillment of the promised prophet of God. Some truly believed Jesus was the Christ, or the "Anointed One." Still others doubted and were skeptical because they thought Jesus was merely a prophet from Galilee. These people made the mistake of citing the Scripture as proof; when concerning Jesus, they were devoid of the facts.

**Seeking out fulfillment (Matt. 2:1-10).** The magi, known also as wise men, came from the east in search of the King of the Jews. How had these men known of the prophecy of the birth of Jesus? Possibly the magi were familiar with the teachings of Daniel. Daniel 2:48 states that "Daniel was ruler over all the province of Babylon and was placed in charge of all of its wise men." Consequently, these wise men came seeking out the fulfillment of God's promise.

**Opposition to the fulfillment (Matt. 2:3-8).** Herod the Great had a vastly inflated ego. He would not tolerate rivals, and he even went so far as to murder his wife and kill his sons. It was said to be safer to be Herod's hog than to be one of his sons! Therefore, he was tremendously upset at the knowledge of a possible rival for his throne. Not only was Herod troubled at the thought of another king, but also the "whole city of Jerusalem was troubled." The turbulent intrigue within Herod's heart was manifested by his pretentious request for the wise men to bring back knowledge of the newfound king's location. Herod's fierce opposition to God's fulfillment for the promised Messiah was his attempt to destroy Jesus with the sword. The slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem will always mark Herod the Great as an arch enemy opposed to God.

**Celebrating the fulfillment (Matt. 2:9-10).** Upon finding the infant Jesus, the magi fell down and worshipped him; and then they opened their treasures and gave gifts to the newborn King. God came to them in a dream and instructed them to depart to their country by another route because of Herod's threats.

Two vastly different attitudes were demonstrated by Herod and the magi. History has recorded that Herod, longing for death as a release from his tortures, died; yet he dreaded death as the beginning of greater terrors. His sons died in infamy and in exile, for the curse of God was on Herod's house. The entire family of Herod had died out within a hundred years.

On the other hand, the magi have the distinct honor of being the ones who probably financed the journey of Mary and Joseph as they sought safety for Jesus in the land of Egypt. The wise men have gone down in history as seekers and as generous people who sought first the kingdom of God.

The fulfillment of God's promise makes the difference in the lives of all people. Christmas Day should take on new meaning as the legacy of Herod and the magi are compared. This day should make a difference in how God's fulfillment of his promise exerts its influence.

Allen lives in Jackson.



# capsules

**ZAMBIAN JUDGE DELAYS TRIAL ON MISSIONARY WORK PERMITS:** LUSAKA, Zambia (BP) — A judge has postponed a trial that will decide the fate of Southern Baptist mission efforts in Zambia. The court case, which began in mid-November, concerns the refusal of Zambian immigration officials to renew work permits or issue new ones to Southern Baptist missionaries in the African country without the approval of the Baptist Convention in Zambia. The convention's executive committee asked for authority to approve all work permit renewals for missionaries. The government immigration office agreed. The Baptist mission protested the decision, and filed a lawsuit after other appeals failed. A court hearing began Nov. 11 to decide the dispute. The judge, however, delayed the case until December, then until Jan. 26. Southern Baptists should pray not only for a decision that will allow missionaries to remain in the country, but also for reconciliation between missionaries and Zambian Baptist leaders, said John Faulkner, administrator for Foreign Mission Board work in eastern and southern Africa.

**CHRISTIAN MOTORCYCLISTS TOUCH 'ANOTHER WORLD':** ENID, Okla. (BP) — Thousands of bikers are in town for a national biker rally. Patches for "Hell's Angels" and other outlaw gangs abound. At the campground gate taking money is a biker dressed in leather gear and wearing the patch, or "colors," of his club. There is something different, though, about this biker. Instead of a skull and crossbones, these colors have a picture of a book with a cross on it and praying hands. The legend reads, "Riding for the Son" and "Christian Motorcyclists Association." The Christian Motorcyclists Association (CMA) was formed by an Arkansas Baptist preacher, Herb Shreve. Shreve was having problems with his teenaged son Herbie and wanted to find a way to bridge the generation gap. So, Herb bought two motorcycles and they began riding together. While riding, they saw a need for ministry and the CMA was born. Today, there are more than 40,000 members of the CMA in more than 300 chapters across the U.S., Canada, and around the world.

**POLICE BACK BENIN BAPTISTS AGAINST FETISHES, SNAKES:** ALLADA, Benin (BP) — Christians in Benin are celebrating a legal victory over hostile fetish worship leaders. Three times in one recent week a Baptist couple in Azoue-Cada, a village in the west African country, found pythons in their bed. After the pythons were found the third consecutive day, the couple called Francois, the church leader, for advice. The snakes, each about three feet long, weren't large enough to crush an adult. But the couple suspected local fetish priests — angered by the Christians' refusal to join others in worshipping pythons as gods — had another target in mind: their newborn child. So Francois killed the snakes and threw them outside. Enraged fetishists tore down the sign at Azoue-Cada Baptist Church and publicly demanded that Francois reimburse them for the snakes. Failure to do so would mean his death and destruction of the church building, they threatened. Local police scheduled a joint session in the government office Nov. 17, where fetish priests were told they had no right to do the things they had done to the Christians. They were ordered to return the church sign and warned any additional trouble would result in police coming to the village to enforce the ruling.

**HAWAII BAPTIST CONVENTION MAKES BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS:** HONOLULU (BP) — Messengers to the annual meeting of the Hawaii Baptist Convention approved a \$2,324,898 budget — \$97,730 less than 1994. The budget projects \$962,529 in Cooperative Program (CP) gifts from Hawaii churches, \$11,748 less than the 1994 budget, and 6% less from the Home Mission Board. Projected special mission offering goals also are less than 1994. The percentage of CP gifts forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention for global causes, meanwhile, was increased from 30.85 to 31.5%. Paul Kaneshiro, pastor of Pukalani Church, was elected president of the convention at the 52nd annual meeting Nov. 10-12 at First Church, Pearl Harbor.

## Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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VON HIQ, I FILX, NBIO ULN IOL ZUNBYL; QY  
ULY NBY WFUS, UHX NBIO IOL JINNYL; UHX QY  
UFF ULY NBY QILE IZ NBS BUHX.

CMUCUB MCRNS-ZIOL: YCABN

This week's clue: N equals T.

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm Seven: One.

# Overall Christmas movie, video fare tends towards the tame

By Phil Boatwright

**HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (BP)** — Even during the Christmas holidays, it's wise to become informed of even the most seemingly innocent fare from Hollywood.

A writer's warning in the *Los Angeles Times* in September is good year-round caution: "Experts who fault the Motion Picture Association of America's film rating system for being of little use say that in order for parents to better judge which movies might be harmful, they need much more information than PG, PG-13, and R."

In this column, by giving the synopsis and content of each release (plus video alternatives), *The Movie Reporter* is attempting to aid both moviegoers and those who wish to combat Hollywood's influence over our society.

## New in theaters

**THE SANTA CLAUSE.** Tim Allen. Fantasy. PG (Santa falls off a roof).

When Santa is incapacitated, a divorced man trying to win back his estranged son takes over and soon finds himself the new Santa. It's both funny and imaginative and I found nothing objectionable as long as you don't have a problem with a movie struggling to convince the young ones of the existence of the big fat man in the long white beard.

**THE MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET.** Richard Attenborough, Mara Wilson. Fantasy. PG (one expletive, Santa is provoked into violence by the film's villain, but he later repents).

The manager of a New York department store hires Kris Kringle to be the store Santa. Soon the old fellow has to convince the woman and her precocious daughter that he truly is Father Christmas. A true delight and a rarity as one of the few worthwhile remakes. Full of laughter, poignancy, and charm, it is noteworthy for containing both visual and verbal Christian metaphors, pointing out that Santa is a symbol and acknowledging God as the Supreme Being. There's even a Thanksgiving prayer — when's the last time you saw that in a Hollywood production? Although Edmund Gwenn and Natalie Wood have nothing to worry about, this newest "Miracle" is destined to become a classic. The scene where a little deaf girl sits on Santa's knee is worth the price of admission. Perhaps the most gratifying movie of the season.

**THE SWAN PRINCESS.** Animated musical fairy tale with the voices of John Cleese, Jack Palance, Sandy Duncan, Steven Wright. G (Sorcery, the death of a parent, a couple of scary scenes — but tame compared to several recent films aimed at kids).

In this review, I will refrain from mentioning the "D" word (you know, the first initial of the

studio renown for animation.) There is no need for comparison, although I'm sure my colleagues in criticism will do so anyway. The *Swan Princess* stands on its own as a classic good vs. evil tale with love and honor rising triumphant. In hopes of reuniting their kingdoms, two monarchs bring their heirs together each

about sisters coming of age. Written, directed, and produced by women and starring Winona Ryder, Susan Sarandon, and Trini Alvarado. Video Alternative: The 1933 version starring Katharine Hepburn.

## Christmas classics on video

— **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE.** I know, I know, we've all seen it a million times, but won't you agree with me that it is one of the most important films Hollywood ever produced? This holiday chestnut reminds us that we touch so many lives and can have a real influence on those lives.

— **THE GATHERING.** Ed Asner and Maureen Stapleton star in this Emmy-winning TV movie focusing on a dying man's efforts to reunite his family. It reinforces the importance of family and presents positive Christian images including a believable prayer, the Scripture reading of Jesus' birth, and a child's christening.

— **A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS.** Great dialogue, charismatic voice performances, and an award-winning jazzy score. And how often do you hear cartoon heroes quoting from the Gospel of Luke?

— **A TIME TO REMEMBER.** Ruben Gomez is a young boy with dreams of becoming an opera singer. Kindly priest Donald O'Connor and a true Christmas miracle help make that dream come true. Rated G.

— **A NORMAN ROCKWELL CHRISTMAS.** Experience the magic of the season through the artist's heartwarming paintings.

— **RED SKELTON'S CHRISTMAS JOLLIES (New).** Favorite Christmas sketches from the "Clown Prince of Comedy."

Boatwright is editor and film reviewer for *THE MOVIE REPORTER* newsletter and author of *HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD VIDEO EVERY TIME*. Further information available from 1-800-221-2648.

**JUNGLE BOOK.** Disney's new version of the Rudyard Kipling tale of a young boy raised by animals. Video Alternatives: both the 1942 version with Sabu and Disney's own breezy 1967 animated musical version with the light-hearted voices of Phil Harris, Sebastian Cabot, George Sanders, and Louis Prima.

**RITCHIE RICH.** Macaulay Culkin plays the comic book rich kid who demolishes bad guy John Larroquette. Sounds like "Home Alone"! It will be a big hit with the kids. Video Alternatives: "Home Alone" (caution: contains slapstick violence and one scene where a child is reading an adult magazine, but it presents positive messages about the need for family and looking out after one another).

**LITTLE WOMEN.** An update of the Louisa May Alcott classic

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December 22, 1994